



YOSEMITE

NATIONAL PARK

"When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe."

— John Muir, *My First Summer in the Sierra*, 1869

PLANNING UPDATE

Volume 24

April 2003

"From the pages of the Yosemite Valley Plan to actions on-the-ground, projects are getting underway."

Dear Yosemite Friends,

Many years of imagining, discussing, and planning for a better future are coming to fruition in Yosemite National Park. Soon, visitors will see firsthand the actions we have decided together should be taken to insure that present and future generations have a chance to experience Yosemite's natural splendor. From the pages of the *Yosemite Valley Plan* to actions on-the-ground, projects are getting underway. This edition of the *Planning Update* will provide you with a look at some of what is scheduled for the remainder of 2003.

In an effort to keep you more connected to what is happening in Yosemite National Park, I invite you to attend one of several upcoming Open Houses (see page 7). If you cannot make it to the park, perhaps we can bring a bit of the park to you! Soon, we will launch a



new monthly email newsletter. This useful tool will allow us to share the latest Yosemite news with you while keeping down the financial and environmental costs associated with circulating another print publication. If you would like to sign up, turn the page for more information.

Although visitors may encounter road detours and other construction activities in the months to come, this transition period bodes well for the future. Despite some temporary annoyances, we feel that a visit to Yosemite will continue to be breathtaking, instructive, and inspirational. When the dust settles, we will be well on our way to achieving what the *Yosemite Valley Plan* envisioned—less congestion and crowding, healthier natural processes, and a better Yosemite Valley experience for all.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Tollefson
Park Superintendent



NPS Photo by Kristina Rylands*

Signs to Come

As projects get underway around the park, communication will play a key role in helping visitors make the most of their Yosemite experience.

E-NEWS COMING SOON

The National Park Service is concerned with providing information to the public in cost-effective and environmentally sensitive ways. In order to reduce the number of newsletters printed, Yosemite National Park may begin distributing information—including this newsletter—via email. This system may be implemented in time for the release of the July newsletter. NOTE: All email addresses are confidential; the National Park Service will not share them with other entities.

To sign up for the Yosemite National Park email mailing list, send your name and email address to:

Yose_Planning@nps.gov

Also let us know if you would like to discontinue receiving a printed newsletter.

Volume 24

April 2003



The Planning Update is an occasional publication of the National Park Service, Office of the Superintendent, Yosemite National Park, P. O. Box 577, Yosemite, CA 95389.

Kristina Rylands edited this issue with contributions from David Siegenthaler, Mike Wichmann, Sue Beatty, and Gary Colliver.

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Works in Progress

The *Yosemite Valley Plan* outlined over 250 actions that would take place during the next 20 years. While clearly no changes can occur overnight, a great deal of preparation has gone into launching some of the initial projects. Today, much has been accomplished that will move these activities from the drawing board to the project site.

In addition to *Yosemite Valley Plan* projects, other work is scheduled to begin in areas around the park. From Tuolumne Meadows to Wawona, from wilderness trails to the Valley Visitor Center, taking care of Yosemite requires the hard work and hands of not only park staff, but scores of volunteers.

Beginning this spring, visitors to Yosemite National Park will notice increased activity throughout the park. Many projects may be less apparent than others, while some may cause temporary inconveniences. However, each one plays a valuable part in the bigger picture of Yosemite's future—to improve the visitor experience while preserving the park's treasured natural and cultural resources, both today and for future generations.

The following activities are currently underway in Yosemite Valley:

- Ecological restoration at the Happy Isles Fen
- Improvements at the Lower Yosemite Fall area, including trail work and removal of the parking lot

Look for these activities to begin around the park from spring to fall:

- Ecological restoration projects at various locations parkwide
- Continued repairs and realignment of the park's antiquated utility systems
- Removal and replacement of the condemned South Fork Merced River Bridge in Wawona
- Removal of Cascades Diversion Dam at the intersection of Big Oak Flat and El Portal Roads
- Renovation of the Yosemite Valley Visitor Center
- Rebuilding of portions of Yosemite Lodge
- Construction of employee housing at Curry Village

To learn more about temporary road closures or traffic delays, call the park's recorded information line at 209/372-0200. For details and updates on these and other Yosemite National Park improvement efforts, visit the park's planning web site at www.nps.gov/yose/planning.





NPS Photo

Hybrid Bus Comes To Yosemite

As part of the October 2002 National Park Service Open House in Yosemite Valley, participants were treated to information—and a ride—on a diesel-electric hybrid bus. More than 100 visitors took the opportunity to go for a test drive on a diesel-electric bus provided by General Motors Corporation. The consensus of these riders who saw and rode the vehicle was that it was considerably quieter than the current shuttles, without producing the exhaust. Passengers also reported a smooth and pleasant ride.

The park is looking into diesel-electric hybrid technology as it prepares to purchase 14 to 19 new transit buses to replace the existing leased fleet. In keeping with the *Yosemite Valley Plan*, new buses must be low emission, low noise, and fuel efficient.

WHAT IS HYBRID TECHNOLOGY?

Hybrid refers to a mix of power sources—in this case, a diesel-electric hybrid engine is powered by both diesel (or biodiesel) fuel and electricity. Similar to the hybrid-electric automobiles currently on the road, the batteries of a hybrid-electric bus stay charged by an electrical generator powered by the diesel engine. The batteries can also be charged by regenerative braking—which means that the battery is recharged as the vehicle brakes or slows down.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Interested bus manufacturers will be allowed to submit proposals beginning in June of this year, and the contract should be awarded in September. Due to the long lead time involved in manufacturing, the new fleet is expected to roll along Valley roads before the 2005 summer season.



Why go hybrid?

Low Emissions

Heavy duty hybrid systems have been shown to reduce some types of emissions by 50 to 60%, making them some of the cleanest vehicles on the road.

Fuel Savings

Without sacrificing emissions reduction, hybrid technology also improves fuel efficiency by 10 to 50%, depending on the vehicle usage.

Low Noise

The engine is small—nearly the size of those found in a large pick-up truck. It is used to charge electric batteries and apply torque once the bus is in motion. Initial torque is applied by electric motors. This keeps down the noise (and emissions) associated with the revving of a typical diesel bus engine.

Easy on Infrastructure

Hybrid technology does not require the construction of expensive fueling facilities and infrastructure.



NPS Photo

Yosemite Valley Integrated Utilities Master Plan*

This project will allow the park to design and construct utility systems that provide adequate service to existing facilities, as well as those called for in the *Yosemite Valley Plan*. At the same time, attention will be devoted to minimizing environmental impacts, removing and rerouting outdated utilities, and allowing for maximum restoration of sensitive ecological areas.

Public scoping on this project closed in March. An environmental assessment is expected to be released for public review during summer 2003.

Camp 4 News

Due to a successful collaboration between the National Park Service and the rock climbing community, Camp 4 was listed with the National Register of Historic Places on February 21, 2003. From 1947 to 1970, Yosemite Valley became a center of rock climbing activity.



Camp 4, a walk-in campground traditionally used by climbers, was instrumental in those early years as climbing grew into a sport.

Cascades Diversion Dam Removal

This project will help restore the hydrologic processes and the free-flowing condition of the Merced Wild and Scenic River. An environmental assessment was released in February and the public comment period closed on March 24. The National Park Service is now analyzing comments. Removal of the Cascades Diversion Dam is expected to begin in early fall 2003.

Cascades
Diversion
Dam

Open For Scoping

Ecological Restoration of Flood-Damaged Yosemite Valley Campgrounds

The public scoping period for this project is now underway. Written comments will be accepted through May 4, 2003 and can be submitted to the park by mail, fax, or email (see back panel). Comments may help shape the ecological restoration plan. As called for in the *Yosemite Valley Plan*, this project would restore to natural conditions the flood-damaged campgrounds at Upper and Lower River and a portion of Lower Pines. Once restored, these areas would be ideal sites for visitors to enjoy hiking, nature study, fishing, picnicking, and experiencing the area's natural quiet.

Ribbon Fall

Devils Elbow

El Capitan
Picnic Area

Main Stem Merced River

Bridalveil
Fall

Cathedral
Beach

Yosemite Lodge Area Redevelopment*

This project includes actions in the Yosemite Lodge area as described in the *Yosemite Valley Plan*. Site designs will be evaluated in an environmental assessment estimated for release for public comment later this summer. On-the-ground activity at Yosemite Lodge is anticipated to begin in December of 2003.

*To request planning documents for review, fill out and return the coupon on the back of this newsletter. These will also be available on the park's web site at www.nps.gov/yose/planning.

n Yosemite Valley

Lower Yosemite Fall Project

In partnership with The Yosemite Fund, the Lower Yosemite Fall area is receiving much-needed improvements. This April, the parking lot at Lower Yosemite Fall will be closed in order to begin the remaining phase of this improvement project, which will include building an improved restroom facility out of the main viewing area. Once the parking area is closed, visitors and tour buses will be directed to alternate parking areas.

Valley Visitor Center Remodel

Beginning this fall, the Valley Visitor Center lobby and Yosemite Association bookstore will undergo a remodeling effort to improve the experience of more than a million annual visitors. This project is being completed with the assistance of The Yosemite Fund and funds received from park entrance fees. Work is expected to take place from fall 2003 with a grand reopening in spring 2004.

Happy Isles Fen Ecological Restoration

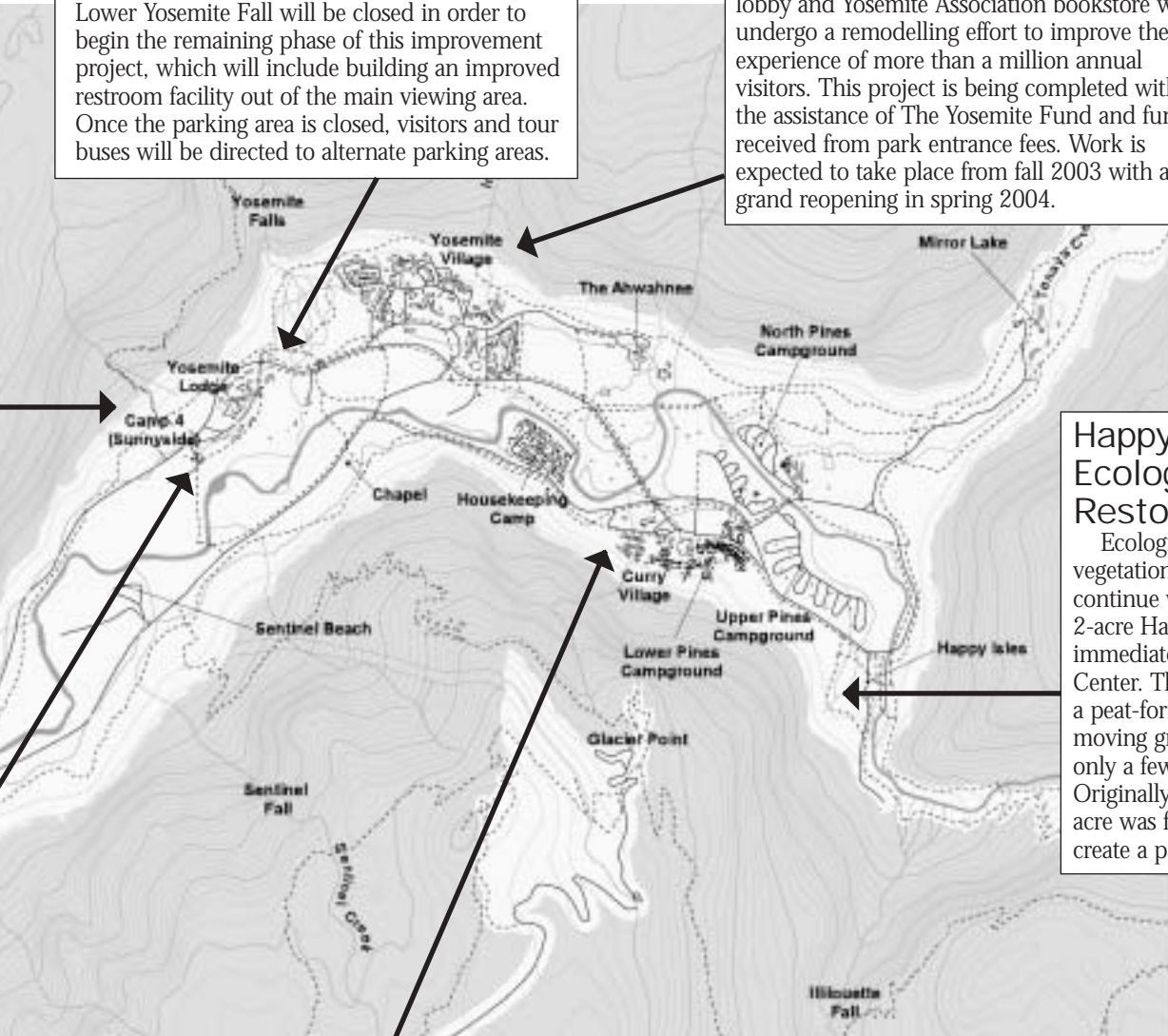
Ecological restoration and vegetation management staff continue work to restore the 2-acre Happy Isles Fen, immediately west of the Nature Center. This rare ecosystem—a peat-forming wetland fed by moving groundwater—is one of only a few remaining in California. Originally 3 acres, in 1928 one acre was filled with river sand to create a parking lot.

Curry Village Employee Housing

As called for in the *Yosemite Valley Plan*, a housing area for concession employees is to be constructed in Curry Village. Compliance for this project was accomplished with the *Yosemite Valley Plan* and design is now underway. Construction of this project is scheduled to begin this fall, with completion late in 2004.

Curry Village and East Valley Campground Improvements*

The goal of this project is to develop more detailed information for particular actions called for in the *Yosemite Valley Plan*. An environmental assessment should be available for public review in summer 2003. Construction of upgrades to east Valley campgrounds and some new guest cabins is scheduled for completion next winter.



Yosemite Fire Management Plan*

Over 140 public comments were received on the *Draft Yosemite Fire Management Plan* and its *Environmental Impact Statement*. Those comments are now being analyzed and will help shape the development of the final plan. This document is expected to be released by summer 2003. Once a Record of Decision is signed, the *Yosemite Fire Management Plan* will be implemented.

South Fork Merced River Bridge Replacement*

In 1992, this bridge, located on the South Fork of the Merced River in Wawona, was inspected and determined to be critically deficient. The following year, a scour hole was discovered under one of the piers. After the flood of 1997, additional scouring and undermining occurred, elevating the need to remove and replace the failing structure. The bridge was closed and a temporary bypass bridge was installed.

Currently, a plan is under development that calls for the removal and replacement of the South Fork Merced River Bridge, along with removal of the temporary bridge. This plan and environmental assessment is anticipated for release for public comment in April with removal to occur during the period of low water in fall 2003.

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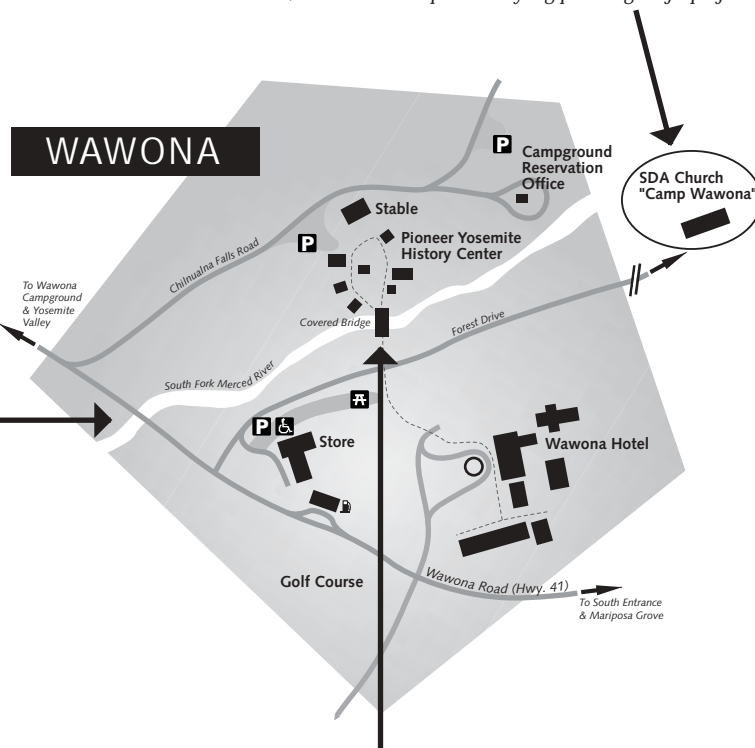
Outside Yosemite Valley

Replacing Flood-Damaged Valley Offices in El Portal

The Yosemite Valley Plan calls for the construction of a new office building in El Portal that will replace offices lost or damaged in Yosemite Valley during the 1997 flood. The new building will be a two-story office addition to the west end of the National Park Service Warehouse Complex in El Portal. Environmental compliance was completed as part of the *Yosemite Valley Plan*. Construction is expected to begin spring 2003 with completion the following winter.

Seventh-Day Adventist Camp Land Exchange

This project involves a land exchange with the National Park Service and Mariposa County at the site of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church's "Camp Wawona." The project would move development away from the adjacent Yosemite Wilderness boundary, and the area of the camp would be restored to natural conditions. Mariposa County is the lead agency for this project and is preparing a combined environmental impact report (under the California Environmental Quality Act) and environmental assessment (under the National Environmental Policy Act). Release of this document for public comment is scheduled for late spring and a public hearing is expected to occur in June. For more information, visit www.mariposacounty.org/planning/majorprojects/SDA.



Wawona Covered Bridge Restoration

The historic Wawona Covered Bridge, which spans the South Fork of the Merced River in Wawona, recently underwent a major restoration effort. The preservation of the structure involved replacing the deteriorated timbers using 19th century methods to replace the handiwork of yesterday's craftsmanship. This bridge, built by Galen Clark in 1868 and later covered in 1878, is one of only two covered bridges in a national park. It is located just north of the Wawona Hotel and is a significant feature at the Pioneer Yosemite History Center.



Environmental Education Campus*

The National Park Service—in collaboration with its nonprofit partner, Yosemite Institute—is proposing to construct an environmental education campus in Yosemite National Park. The existing facility is located at Crane Flat, just east of the Tuolumne Grove parking area on Tioga Road. This campus is cobbled together from buildings dating prior to World War II when the facility functioned as a Blister Rust Camp, a staging area for the Civilian Conservation Corps in its effort to eradicate blister rust disease from area conifers.

Today, the Yosemite Institute campus at Crane Flat provides rustic accommodations that are inadequate for children. Redevelopment of the campus is necessary to meet current health and safety requirements, along with the demand for high-quality, resource-related education and interpretation activities at a price affordable to a more diverse range of students.

A range of alternatives consistent with the park's *General Management Plan* will be presented in an environmental impact statement for the project, slated for release in the summer of 2003. The proposed facility would include dormitory and classroom spaces, an on-site laboratory, and a small outdoor amphitheater. Other concepts include possible retention of the historic structures and redevelopment of the existing campus footprint, or creation of a larger facility.

Since 1971, the National Park Service has worked alongside Yosemite Institute to administer the park's environmental education campus. Yosemite Institute has a highly regarded and long history of providing visitors with programs that expose them to Yosemite's compelling stories. The residential field science focus makes it possible for children—and adults—to make lasting connections to the natural world. The ultimate goal is to foster a sense of appreciation and stewardship, not just for Yosemite National Park, but for one's own backyard.

For more information on the environmental education campus in Yosemite, visit online at www.nps.gov/yose/planning. For information on Yosemite Institute, visit www.yni.org/yi.

Mark Your Calendar

When it comes to planning for Yosemite's future, the National Park Service believes that the voices of the public are vital. At regularly scheduled Open Houses, visitors, employees, and interested members of the public can get up-to-the-minute information on a number of improvement projects occurring throughout Yosemite National Park.

Park staff and project managers are available to answer questions, listen to concerns, and accept written comments. So far this year, nearly 400 individuals have participated!

Mark your calendar now for future Open Houses. Check on the park's web site for locations and times.

- ☐ April 23
- ☐ May 21
- ☐ June 25
- ☐ July 30

www.nps.gov/yose/planning



YOSEMITE
INSTITUTE

Yosemite Institute is a private non-profit organization dedicated to providing educational adventures in nature's classroom to inspire a personal connection to the natural world and responsible actions to sustain it.

For over 30 years, Yosemite National Institutes has served over 40,000 youth and adults annually through a unique variety of environmental education programs at national park campuses in California and Washington.

To help keep costs down,
you are encouraged to
view planning documents
online by visiting

www.nps.gov/yose/planning



NPS Photo by Colleen Brown*

Stay Involved!

In the months to come, several planning efforts will release documents during their official public comment period. If you would like to receive a copy for review, please check the boxes below that apply. **If you have already requested one of these planning documents, you do not need to submit another request.**

Curry Village & East Yosemite Valley Campground Improvements Environmental Assessment

☐ Printed copy

☐ CD ROM

Environmental Education Campus Development/Draft Environmental Impact Statement

☐ Printed copy

☐ CD ROM

Final Yosemite Fire Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement

☐ Printed copy

☐ CD ROM

South Fork Bridge Replacement Project Environmental Assessment

☐ Printed copy

Yosemite Lodge Area Redevelopment Environmental Assessment

☐ Printed copy

☐ CD ROM

Yosemite Valley Integrated Utilities Master Plan Environmental Assessment

☐ Printed copy



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yose_planning@nps.gov

• Fill out & mail coupon below to:

Yosemite Planning
P. O. Box 577
Yosemite National Park, CA 95389

• Fax this coupon to:

(209) 379-1294

• Phone in your request to:

(209) 379-1365

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